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DE RUEHLM #1140/01 3490557  
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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0975  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2162  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9196  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7441  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5295  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3594  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5225  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0093  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0760  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4342  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9756  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7047  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0081  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3906  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001140

//CANCEL - RESENT AS COLOMBO 1148 //

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)  
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON KEY IDP PROTECTION ISSUES

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15. (SBU) In addition to the threats returnees face when returning to areas not fully demarcated, the UN cannot access areas lacking demining certification, and thus returnees must walk long distances, often through mined areas, to transit centers to pick up food and other assistance. Lack of UN presence in many areas also limits protection monitoring. Lack of demining in many paddy fields prevents farmers from planting and leaves them without a livelihood. While some advocates continued to call for mine risk education, one INGO representative noted that IDPs from the Vanni had been educated about mines for years and that accidents would stem less from lack of awareness than the necessity of earning a living.

SINGLE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

16. (SBU) The war, subsequent disappearances, and large numbers of persons held in detention centers had left many people, primarily women, heading households on their own. Many were only recently on their own and had not yet developed coping strategies. Some women did not yet feel capable of returning and preferred to stay in camps. Some of those who did return felt vulnerable in isolated areas without electricity, or ill-equipped to rebuild their homes on their own. Gender-based violence and exploitation has been reported in the camps and could also surface in returns areas. IDPs had also reported considerable anxiety about

separated family members, making family reunification an important part of recovery.

#### RETRAINING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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¶7. (SBU) Land-mine accidents and other war-related violence had left a large population of amputees and other disabled persons. They would need assistance developing new skills and livelihoods.

#### NGO ACCESS

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¶8. (SBU) NGOs and INGOs still lacked adequate access to returns areas. While some INGOs have recently been granted access to work in the health sectors, others have had their applications for work in returns areas denied by the Presidential Task Force (PTF). The Sri Lankan Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies had circulated guidelines entitled "Collaboration between Government and NGOs in North Sri Lanka" regarding selection of INGOs for approval and collaboration requirements, but INGOs had not received the guidelines directly from the PTF and it was unclear whether the PTF has approved them. In addition to playing an important role in protection monitoring, INGOs could bring specialized services such as medical care and other services. UN agencies were working to ensure a smooth transition from relief to development activities.

#### LAND AND PROPERTY RESTITUTION

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¶10. (SBU) As returns increase, so will property disputes in particular, as some of the more long-term IDPs begin to

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¶11. (SBU) While the GSL had greatly improved the returns process by providing the International Organization for Migration advance notice of organized returns, the IDPs themselves were still excluded from the process. IDPs were asked to be on standby for organized returns for up to a week. They were given insufficient detail about conditions in their areas of origin to make informed decisions about returning.

#### DE-MILITARIZATION

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¶12. (SBU) In some areas, particularly Kilinochchi, the military maintained a strong presence and sometimes occupied civilian homes. Interlocutors reported slow demilitarization. High security zones continued to bar some returns as well.

#### PREVIOUS IDPS

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¶13. (SBU) The GSL has taken a new interest in the "old IDP" caseload of approximately 300,000 who were displaced before August 2008. On December 7, Resettlement Minister Bathiudeen announced that the GSL would begin returning Muslim IDPs from the Northern Province back to their homes on December 26. An estimated 65,000 to 72,000 Muslim Sri Lankans were expelled from the Northern Province by the LTTE in October 1990. They have lived in displacement for the last 19 years, mainly in camps in Puttalam. The GSL had indicated that it would like UNHCR to extend its support, which now targets post-August 2008 IDPs, to this caseload. UNHCR's budget provided only for the "new IDPs." In UNHCR's view, the newer group was generally more vulnerable as it had not had access to livelihoods in camps. However, UNHCR did recognize that there were vulnerable IDPs among the older group too, and would consider supporting them based on funding availability and donor input.

#### POTENTIAL FOR FORCED RETURNS

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¶14. (SBU) One humanitarian advocate opined that political pressure could prompt the GSL to close Manik Farm completely before all IDPs had safe, viable destinations for return. The GSL could simply force returns and decline to continue to recognize IDPs or it could move people to transit camps in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. Some felt transit camps would be preferable, but there is currently little humanitarian access to these areas.

¶15. (SBU) COMMENT: While recent GSL policy changes may be in part politically motivated as the election draws near, they are nonetheless welcome improvements. As IDPs move from camps to home or transferred displacement, the focus of those providing assistance will also shift, while continuing to